Special Report from North Vietnam

So Now (We Suppose) As A Christian Nation We'll Stop Bombing the Vietnamese And Urge the United Nations to Admit Communist China to Membership

"To the pluralism of states, which can no longer ignore one another, you offer an extremely simple and fruitful formula of co-existence. . . . You give sanction to the great principle that the relations between peoples should be regulated by reason, by justice, by law, by negotiation; not by force, not by violence, not by war. . . . Your vocation is to make brothers not only of some but of all peoples. . . . Strive to bring back among you any who have separated themselves, and study the right method of uniting to your pact of brotherhood . . . those who do not yet share in it. Act so that those outside will desire and merit the confidence of all; and then be generous in granting such confidence."

—Pope Paul to the UN General Assembly Oct. 4.

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What Our Bombers Are Doing to A Helpless Little Country

By Chris Koch

I made the last leg of the trip over the mountains from China in the midst of the late August monsoon. The wild clouds suddenly cleared over the Vietnam foothills. Black-brown crags rose out of lush green rice paddies. The Red River Delta stretched to the West in patterns of green and gray, and Vietnam lay below with the strange familiarity of a land from a childhood fairy tale.

The comfortable illusion of the fairy tale was shattered on the trip from the airport into Hanoi. Vietnam is a country at war. The road was filled with young people coming home from the fields armed with rifles. Trucks and cars were camouflaged with fresh foliage. The bridge across the Red River was heavily fortified with anti-aircraft guns. Slit trenches and fox holes lined the country roads, and low, ugly bomb shelters squatted near the city streets.

The Life of The Streets

It was hot and crowded. Pedicabs, ox carts, bicycles, and a few motor vehicles jammed the streets. The sidewalks and stores were full of shoppers. I was told that 50,000 women and children had been evacuated from Hanoi. But if so the evacuation did not seem to make a noticeable difference, and women and children made up their share of the crowds.

The men were dressed in light cotton shirts and washable pants. The women wore the traditional baggy pants and tightly fitted dresses slit at the waist. They sat at long tables in the cafes under the glow of single, naked light bulbs drinking beer or tea and eating bowls of rice with fried meat and vegetables. Others rummaged about in the sparse merchandise or toiled in workshops over handicraft production. No more than half of North Vietnam's goods are produced by modern industry.

The old native section of Hanoi is an ugly jumble of homes and shops in a dozen imitation French styles, carelessly mixed together on long, narrow streets. By contrast, the former French Quarter is still gracious with rows of 19th century French mansions sitting well back from its shaded boulevards. These are now government offices or foreign embassies. We stayed in the old Metropole Hotel, a center of the French colonialists before 1954. Now the French officers and their wives, the priests and the Western journalists are gone. The Metropole, renamed the Unity, is full of Asians, a few Africans and some Eastern European technicians. We were treated politely, but we felt conspicuously alien. Wherever we walked we were followed by curious children.

The days began early. But as I lay in bed before getting up at six, I could already hear groups of young people singing as they returned from militia training in the countryside. The preparation for war went on all day. Groups of young people dismantled and reassembled rifles in the parks. Others studied detailed models of U.S. aircraft and took aim at simulated targets gliding down guide wires.

North Vietnam, as her leaders are quick to point out, is poor. Her shops have essentials and a few luxuries, but as a youth leader told me while we were standing in Hanoi's major department store looking at a pile of ugly suitcases, "consumer goods are neither of good quality nor fashionable." Then he continued more proudly, "but we make 90% of them ourselves and preserve our foreign exchange for heavy industry."

(Continued on Page Two)

Piercing An American Iron Curtain

I. F. Stone is recovering from an ear operation to restore the hearing in his left ear (the right was restored last year by Dr. Sam Rosen.) This issue was written by Chris Koch, program director of Pacifica's New York station WBAI, who just returned from Vietnam. He was one of four Americans invited there by the North Vietnam Youth Federation, the first Americans publicly to visit the country since travel there was forbidden by the State Department after the 1954 Geneva accords. Life Magazine *(Oct.1) ran two pages of pictures Koch brought back but none of bombed civilian targets, and appended a snide caption. Except for the* New York Times *and the* St. Louis Post-Dispatch, *the press gave scant coverage to a conference held by the four on their return. NBC and WNDT, New York's educational station, both had an interview with Koch, but neither used it. A WNDT executive told Koch he was "political dynamite." A* Look *editor told Koch, "We know all we need to know about North Vietnam." Mr. Koch is preparing a book on his visit.*

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North Vietnam faces formidable problems in industrializing. The division of Vietnam in 1954 immediately confronted the North with a food shortage. It is one of the most densely populated areas of the world. The Red River Delta has an average of 1,256 people per square mile compared with not more than 600 in the Mekong Delta in the South. Traditionally the South exported rice to the North, and the North provided coal for the South.

Despite this marginal agricultural potential, North Vietnam is trying to develop her industry on the surplus that can be wrung from agriculture. This requires sacrifice. The Party's theoretician Le Duan gave some idea of how far this goes when he said in 1962, "There will be no harm if we temporarily abstain from eating sweets made of groundnuts and export them instead to pay for machines."

Industry Still Marginal

The leaders claim that food production has increased by 50% in the last 11 years and that the share of industry in total production has risen from 17% to 50% since 1955. No one is starving in North Vietnam, and there are many new factories and mines. But her industry is still marginal.

The destruction outside of Hanoi is appalling. I spent two days in Thanh Hoa province and I was shocked to find much of it like a huge battlefield. Elaborate defense precautions were taken everywhere. Many of the roads and towns were partially destroyed. There were always planes and flashes of bombs or ack-ack somewhere in the sky. The Vietnamese call these areas under attack "the front." There they apply their experience of more than twenty years of warfare. Traffic moves at night without lights, cities are partially evacuated during the day, and hospitals and schools have been dispersed throughout the countryside.

We left for Thanh Hoa late one afternoon with our two translators, Quy Du and Trung Hieu, and several others in two heavily camouflaged Soviet jeeps. Most Vietnamese are remarkably engaging people, personally kind and gentle. I frequently marveled at the smiles they used while telling stories of torture and destruction as if to say, "Yes, such things do happen, but we will not let the brutality of others destroy our humanity, will we?"

The old French military road to the South, lined with young trees, was crowded all night with carts, bicycles and trucks filled with produce. Water buffalo, tended by small children on their backs, grazed on the strip of grass next to the pavement. Peasants in conical hats worked in the paddies. Fishermen flung their nets over the ponds against the late afternoon sun. Modern and ancient tools were used side by side. In one field two young women stood with a basket suspended between them on a long rope. They swung the basket into an irrigation ditch, over the dike and into the field, rhythmically filling the paddy with water, a basketful at a time, as their ancestors had done for centuries. In the next field an electric pump did the same job in minutes.

The towns along the highway were bustling and cheerful. The Vietnamese seem to take the air strikes in their stride. Nguyen Cu, the young, intelligent chairman of the Thanh Hoa Youth Federation told me later, "We still try to live as we used to. On moonlight nights we meet outside to sing and dance. When it rains we meet inside with lamps. And if Johnson comes we have a special leaf we carry to conceal the light." The Vietnamese call the bombing planes "Johnson." Cu added, "we live at night now, but we still have the cinema and more artists and singers come from Hanoi than before. So you see it is the same." But of course it is not the same. North Vietnam looks as if it is being systematically bled to death by U. S. bombing.

We drove through Nam Dinh, North Vietnam's third largest city and a new industrial center at dusk. From the jeep I saw a bombed pagoda, a partially destroyed hospital and a school yard full of craters. The famous Nam Dinh Textile Factory built by the French was a jumble of twisted, bombed out buildings. But I was most struck by the working class homes around the factory which had been levelled to a pile of charred bricks and bamboo for blocks in every direction. The sun set south of Nam Dinh and we drove into the hills in darkness and silence, threading our way through a long, military convoy.

There are many bridges between Hanoi and Thanh Hoa. Three of the four major ones have been destroyed. One of these was almost rebuilt. Another has been replaced by a pontoon bridge that is floated out at dusk and hidden under the trees at dawn. The third, the Ham Rong rail bridge, was still serviceable. Traffic moved slowly but steadily on the front. The railroad parallelling the highway was busy all night.

Thanh Hoa province has been heavily hit. At Hospital Number 71 which was destroyed in three raids on July 8th, I talked with its Vice Director Nguyen That. That said the thirty building complex had been a research and treatment center for tuberculosis. Now it was a skeleton against the morning sky. Forty doctors and patients were dead.

We visited the Dai Thang agricultural co-op. It is simply a cluster of buildings in the middle of rice paddies far from

No End to Progress in South Vietnam

"Prime Minister Nguyen Cao Ky said today he is considering opening pleasure camps providing entertainment, including girls and bars for front line U.S. combat troops. He also said the government favors a form of controlled prostitution in the Central Highlands with U.S. doctors giving women regular medical check-ups. The policy has already been discussed in several South Vietnamese towns and in some places is already being practiced."

—Reuters dispatch from Saigon, Sept. 27.

One Way to Evade An Honest Answer

"For months now the U.S. Air Force has been daily bombing the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam, indiscriminately attacking civilian and military objectives alike, thus creating a situation of de facto war. Is this —and I would like an answer 'yes' or 'no'—a violation of the United Nations Charter?"

—Huot Sambath (Cambodia) at the UN Oct. 1.

'There is no country more anxious than mine to bring an end to the conflict, and the destruction and suffering it entails, in Viet-Nam. . . . No amount of distortion can change into imperialism the temporary military assistance which my Government and others have given to South Vietnam. . . . Our military response has been —and will continue to be—measured by the military challenge. . . . Our ultimate objective is no more than the establishment of conditions under which the people of South Vietnam can exercise the right of self-determination." *—Goldberg (U.S.) later the same day.*

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any possible military target. Pham Van Ky, the old peasant who was chairman of the Party committee, reminded me of the agricultural workers of California or the rural Mississippi Negroes. He had a natural dignity and warmth, but his eyes never left your face as he tested your reaction. "Illiteracy has been wiped out," he said, "the old people have a shirt on their back and they know they will get their bowls of rice. One out of every ten families has mosquito netting." While we took notes, the other villagers looked on, shyly smiling in proud confirmation of what he said.

Ky described the air strike against his village with the statistical literalness of the newly educated. "There were four raids in 45 days. Twenty children between three months and ten years were killed. Fifteen elderly people were killed. One hundred twenty-nine houses were destroyed; 200 were damaged. Three cows, one buffalo, and one horse were killed and we lost one bicycle."

In Cold Figures

These cold figures give some idea of the destructiveness of one raid. Official Defense Department figures give some idea of the number and magnitude of such raids. There were 1224 air raids on North Vietnam in August, dropping 2540 tons of bombs and rockets.

While I was there, U.S. planes bombed the Ban Thach dam outside of Thanh Hoa city. Cu said it was part of a new irrigation and electric power system. The destruction by bombardment of North Vietnam's painfully built up system of flood and irrigation dams would be genocidal. Its rice crop, the mainstay of the people's diet, depends on a sufficient and well regulated supply of water. In the Red River delta, the rivers are higher than the land in many places, and the crops and people must be protected by a complex system of dams and dikes. Without them the plains would be inundated, the rice crop lost, and several million could perish from flood and hunger.

Any large building in North Vietnam may be a target for the U.S. raids. Since the attacks began, North Vietnam has dispersed its hospitals and schools throughout small villages In one such small hospital we talked with some of the victims: a ten year old boy who had lost his leg above the knee while he was playing in his school yard; a 27 year old woman, seven months pregnant, caught on the highway during a raid, her back was broken; a young man who was planting rice when his insides were torn out.

I had expected to find a great bitterness in the Vietnamese. There was surprisingly little, and most of it was directed against Taylor, McNamara, Rusk, and Johnson. Johnson took the brunt of it. When the planes come the tiny children run through the streets shouting, "John's coming! John's coming!" In the monosyllabic Vietnamese language most people shorten Johnson to John. Pictures of mangled children in the newspapers are captioned, "present from L.B.J."

One afternoon we sat in a pine forest in the hills of Thanh Hoa with a group of young people who asked us about the peace movement in the United States. They had a surprisingly detailed knowledge of it. Everyone knew of Alice Herz, the American who burned herself in gasoline, emulating the Buddhists, to protest the war in Vietnam. They vastly overestimated the strength of the peace movement.

We spent the rest of the afternoon with them, and that evening we sat under a crescent moon together. We talked about many other things, barely mentioning the war. I asked one girl what she looked for in a man and she replied, "a fighting spirit." They took our hands later and sang us songs, mainly about love. "You see our girls are very militant," Hieu said with gentle irony, "but when it comes to music they prefer romantic songs."

We had our nearest aid raid that evening. They rushed us over to a shelter and we stood by the entrance watching the brilliant flares in the sky and the bursts of rockets and ack-ack. It was painful standing there to realize that some of these young people I had come to feel so close to would be dead before this war was over, blown apart by our rockets or burned to death by our napalm.

I have not been able to forget that moment. We said

So Now We're Sapping It

"Unless major military operations sap a substantial proportion of North Vietnam's national effort, a degree of industrial progress is likely to be achieved that may well become a more effective means of political penetration in neighboring countries than direct military penetration."

—North Vietnam Today: Profile of A Communist Satellite, edited by P. J. Honey (Praeger, 1962).

A Captured U.S. Airman For Whom Killing By Bombardment Was "Just Another Job"

The Vietnamese let us talk to Captain Robert Daughtrey whose F-105D was shot down over the Ham Rong bridge on August 2nd. Daughtrey was a career man. He had served in the air force from 1954 to 1958 and he returned to it in 1963 after failing to make a living at farming. "You see I love to fly. And flying commercial is not the same thing. When I'm up there, I'm all alone in the plane." Daughtrey also explained that the air force paid well and had generous fringe benefits.

We asked him what he felt about killing people and destroying things. He said he'd never thought about it. Then he added, "I never thought I'd be shot at." We asked him why he thought he'd been sent to bomb North Vietnam, and he replied: "Well, I guess the war escalated and they sent me. I'm not a politician. I'm a military man. An army is built on discipline. You just follow orders." He said he had not been given any political education in the air force. "It was just another job, like working in a factory." Daughtrey said that pilots did not talk much about their missions. After he was hit by anti-aircraft he tried to get as far away from the target as possible, because his officers had told him, "people are pretty mad right where you've just bombed." But he landed near the bridge with both arms broken. "I thought they'd kill me," he said. Instead, they put splints on his arms, and fed him hot tea with sugar and bread dipped in condensed milk. He has been kept in a hospital in Hanoi since his capture where he rooms with another pilot.

Daughtrey seems to feel that if he maintains his pleasant disposition and does what he is told to do, nothing serious can ever happen to him. "When I get out of this I think I'd make a fine salesman for Sears, Roebuck." He did not express any strong emotional attachment to anything except flying. When we asked if he had any message for his wife and three children he said, "No, just tell my dad I'm all right. He'll pass the message along."

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(*Continued from page Three*)

goodby in the middle of the night on the edge of the Song Chu. The stars were bright and clear as they usually are only from the highest mountains. We could still see rockets and flares in the distance.

Someone in Vietnam discovered that a rifle bullet can bring down a jet. Now the Vietnamese mass scores of people in trenches and fill the air with bullets when planes pass over. I have no idea how much military value these rifles have, but they have an enormous psychological effect. Everyone can now take part in the national defense. There is no question but that they do so willingly. The only complaints I heard against the government were from young people who wanted to be released from school to join the Viet Cong. There is an intense new nationalism in Vietnam today. The intellectuals go back into Vietnamese history and glorify the heroes of the resistance against the Chinese. The youngsters long to emulate the revolutionary exploits of their leaders.

With Their Own Hands

The Vietnamese proudly wear a shirt made of their own, domestically produced cloth. When the textile factory that made the shirt is bombed it is an almost personal affront. The dams that are bombed were built by hundreds of people who worked for days with shovels and baskets to create an irrigation system. A dam is part of the community in a way that no power company dam built by bulldozers can ever be.

I asked many people how they thought the war would end. Most were confident of ultimate victory. Victory, a university student told me, "means that we want to be left alone to settle our own affairs." The Vietnamese that I met were in no mood to negotiate. There is a story making the rounds in North Vietnam attributed to Ho Chi Minh. "Look, a bandit breaks into your house, steals half your belongings, kills part of your family, and then sits down and says, 'let's negotiate.' Would you talk to him or kick him out?"

We saw Ho twice, once at the 20th anniversary of independence where he sat on the stage with his jacket open and his sandals off in amazing though dignified informality. The second time we were at the opera, and Ho came in without causing any disturbance and sat in the last row of the first section of the orchestra. You see fewer pictures of Ho in Hanoi that you see of Johnson in Washington. While there seems to be no "cult" around him, there is deep affection. Anecdotes about him crop up in almost every conversation.

We were unable to meet Ho, but we interviewed Premier Pham Van Dong for about an hour. Dong who extended the President's apologies to us, is one of his closest and oldest associates. He was waiting at the bottom of the steps to the Presidential Palace when our car arrived, dressed like every Vietnamese in a cotton shirt, pants and sandals without a tie or jacket. We had tea in the grand reception room, but the Premier soon took us back outside where he answered our questions while we strolled through the gardens. He is very much the French intellectual, extremely urbane and witty. While he made no new statement to us, he spoke with conviction about the course of the war and insisted that the United States must accept the principles of Vietnamese unity, sovereignty, and independence before negotiations can take place.

As we drove to the airport early on the morning we left North Vietnam, Truc the head of the Youth Federation, put his hand on my knee and said, "you will tell the American people about Vietnam." I nodded. "You know," he added, "this war can only be ended by the people of both our countries." I was too moved to reply. We were handed flowers as we stepped aboard the plane. In a few minutes we were aloft. Hanoi was below us, busy with its defenses, waiting to be bombed. Nine thousand miles away, back home, I found that the bombings of North Vietnam hardly make news any more, and few have any conception of what they cost this brave and distant people.

Pointee-Talkee

A provincial museum visited in Thanh Hoa displayed the uniform and gear of a downed U.S. flier, with a flag on which a message had been written in several Asian languages, "I am a citizen of the USA. I do not speak your language. Misfortune forces me to seek your assistance in obtaining shelter and protection. My government will reward you." Along with this was an Asian phrase book entitled Pointee-Talkee. Among the phrases, "Will you accept gold?", "Where is the nearest telephone?" and "Where are the friendly guerrillas?" The last is a question the Pentagon has been asking wistfully about North Vietnam for several years.

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